121 In other publications (2) we have brought up the question of
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> 2. On dual organization in South America, América Indígena, Mexico, 1944. On certain structural similarities of the Chibcha and Nambikwara languages. Congrès International des Américanistes, Paris, 1947.

knowing if the type of life of the Nambikwara, apparently very primitive, does or does not constitute the authentic vestige of ancient conditions. Considered in the present, their level of culture is certainly very low. They live naked, especially the women, who only wear a thin string of buriti beads around the waist, some earrings, necklaces worn around the neck or looped over the shoulder, [14] bracelets made from the tail of the large armadillo, and, sometimes, some narrow bands of cotton woven by their husbands, or some buriti straw, tightly bound around the biceps, and wooden pins. Besides the same ornaments, the men sometimes put on a sort of straw pompom, fastened to the waist above the sex organs, and smaller ones, attached to cotton bracelets; on the other hand, they do not wear shell bracelets. The complete ignorance of the hammock and the Nambikwara
[513] custom of sleeping on the ground (or, more rarely, on long strips of the bark of the palm tree paxiuba) has intrigued ethnologists for a long time. This sentiment is shared by neighboring tribes, and the
[101] Paressi, mentioning this peculiarity, call the Nambikwara Uaikoakoré, "those who sleep on the ground."

221 The Nambikwara year must be divided into two distinct periods. During the rainy season (from October to March), each group settles on some small elevation rising above the course of some stream. The Indians then construct crude huts with curious variations in form and materials. They burn clearings in the approaches to the forests which
221 occupy the humid valley floor, and there they plant and cultivate
241 gardens principally with the starch-yielding plants of the manihot genus (sweet and bitter) and tobacco, sometimes some peas, cotton, peanuts, and calabash (Lagenaria sp.). They grate the yucca (manioc) on planks covered with the sharp bark of the palm tree, they press it with the aid of a piece of twisted bark. The garden produce furnishes food resources sufficient for part of the sedentary period, and even of use later: the Nambikwara preserve the yucca by burying the residue of the "grated" pulp in the ground.

221 At the arrival of the dry season, they abandon the village, or rather the site of temporary residence, and each group "breaks up," if one can say that, into several nomadic bands. For about seven

115 a7. --A pretty woman of some twenty years, perhaps less; young
157 wife of A6. Her parents are living and reside, she says, in the village. She is asintu of A1 and a2, arindesu of a3 and a4, aseetasu of a5. She is stupid, egotistical, interested only in herself. She considers herself very seductive, which appears to be (from the Indian point of view, of course) very exaggerated. She systematically refuses to show the slightest interest in the two daughters of her husband, conducts herself very amorously as concerns him.

115 a8 and a9--About six and two years, daughters of the first mar-
855 riage of A6 and daughters of the deceased daughter of a14. The two
157 children are practically left to themselves. Their stepmother does not bother with them; their father takes care of them when his manly tasks and his wife permit him the time. Their grandmother is their
[603] chief aid and it is to her that they run when they hurt themselves, are hungry, thirsty or afraid. But she herself is absorbed by the cares of her sons, of her stepson (A15) and of her husband. And very often the baby is neglected for entire days, covered with ashes and filth, unless some woman of the group, seized by pity or simply [43] disgusted, takes her and gives her a bath. Most often it is her big sister, precociously mature, who takes care of her, carries her, even though she is scarcely any bigger, feeds her and cleans her up. Both are charming children, gay and hungry for caresses like those who are habitually deprived of them. Their lot is a great worry for the
● [181] community. Under this regime of a hard life constantly absorbed by the small tasks, each one of which is hard work, one can with difficulty accept other cares than one's own. And these neglected children are a perpetual source of irritation, of which they are often the victims, even when taken care of. Many times we wondered if we should not take charge of the youngest of the children. They would have given her to us gladly. uThe baby was so cute that we would have been tempted if the perspective of seeing ourselves having a quarrel on the return trip with the Service for the Protection of the Indians had not, very reasonably, dissuaded us.

115 A10. --About 40 years. He is alonsu of A1, ajunkedisu of a2,
157 ahuinosu of a5, married to a11. His parents are dead. He is amiable and grinning, he suffers from a hernia which he hides under a piece of cloth hanging from his waist. His activity is considerably decreased. He is little interested in our work and not very eager to understand our questions and give us information.

a11. --About 40 years. Wife of A10. She is a "sister" of a2, a "wife" of A1, a "mother" of a5. She is dark, eager and industrious,

591 A27 with his son A28. All this offers a very confusing spectacle,
621 and it is not the only case among the Nambikwara where the sociologist feels discouraged from deducing fixed rules. In a case such as that of the rules of residence, the answers of the Indians and the study of the facts might lead one to conclude that these rules do not exist, but such a conclusion should not be accepted except with the most extreme reservations. We shall be forced from time to time to insist on the fact that, in a society whose demographic base is broken up in a very short space of time, the traditional rules might be clouded by the necessity of solving cases which have become individual and concrete by force of things. Among peoples who live under such strenuous conditions, a certain distribution in elementary associations of individuals of different sex and age might be decisive to assure the means of existence for each of them. Many family combinations seem thus to result from immediate necessities. It could also be that the rules exist, and are based on sociological
● 181 reasons which escape us. A society made up of wandering bands which one never finds again with the same composition after a few weeks interval because certain members or families have left it, while others have come to join up; whose camps never offer the same exact distribution from day to day; whose winter huts are most
[609] often destroyed during the dry season; who flee one another, chase one another off, attack each other in frequent conflicts, and about which the least one can say is that in periods of peace, they avoid one another; whose [50] material culture, reduced to the strict minimum, puts into use only rudimentary techniques where social differentiations cannot be expressed; such a society offers to the sociologist ever-changing material, that is fleeting and often cannot be grasped. In very numerous cases, its laws of organization escape analysis and, supposing that they exist, could not be discovered except on the occasion of an extended visit, not only during the period of the nomadic life, but also of the sedentary life.

621 Central and southern group, dialect b1: tarũnde, maimãde (b1); mamaĩndeti (c) oaĩndesu, nikoêdetosu (a1).

We have divided the encampment of the two groups b1 and c. The latter is composed of 17 persons divided into five fires. Both
[101 were wandering in the zone of the line of the separation of waters
131] between the Tapajoz and the Madeira (Vilhena Rivers). We shall

3: Lévi-Strauss E-5 (1938-1939) 1944
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

Gardening exists only during the rainy season and does not free the Nambikuara from wandering during the seven months of the dry season, looking for wild roots, fruits and seeds, small animals such as lizards, snakes, bats, spiders and grasshoppers and, generally speaking, anything which may prevent them from starving. As a matter of fact, their geographical surroundings, which are located in the northwestern part of the state of Mato Grosso and include the headwaters of the Tapajos, Rio Roosevelt and Rio Gi-Parana, consist of a desolated savanna with few vegetal resources and still less game.

Had I approached my subject from a point of view other than the one outlined above, I could not have avoided a long discussion in South American cultural history, aimed at clearing up this apparent primitiveness, on the question as to whether the survival of early conditions of life in South America is genuine or whether we should consider it as a more recent—although undoubtedly pre-columbian—result of culture clashes and processes of acculturation. Whatever the answer may be, it cannot substantially change our problem: whether tarriant or recessive, the Nambikuara society functions, in the present, as one of the simplest forms of human society to be conceived. We shall not seek information from the particular history which kept them in their exceptionally crude organization or brought them back to it. We shall only look at the experiment in social anthropology which they now enact under our very eyes.

This holds especially true in respect to their social and political life. For if we do not know what was the material culture of the Nambikuara forty years ago (they were discovered only in 1907), we do know that their numbers became tremendously reduced after their contact with white civilization. General (then Colonel) Candido Mariano da Silva Rondon, who discovered and studied them, first stated that their number was about 20,000. This was around 1915. I take this figure as greatly exaggerated, but even if reduced by one half, it considerably exceeds the present number which is hardly more than 2,000. Epidemics have taken care of the difference. What does this mean, from the point of view of our study? During the dry season, the Nambikuara live in nomadic bands, each one under the leadership of a chief, who, during the sedentary life of the rainy months, may be either a village chief or a person of position. General Rondon wrote that, at the time he was exploring the country, it was not rare to see bands averaging two or three hundred individuals. Now, sixty or seventy

4: Obrg E-5 (1949)1953
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

ooo sionaris had not yet learned enough Iraíra to make working with informants possible.

621 As alof the following information, unless other-
622 wise spetified, relates to the Wakítisu band, a short decription of this band is in order. Today the band consists of 18 individuals, of which Julio
[731] is the *cief*. About 5 years ago, before a measles epidemi decimated it, the band was roughly twice the sizit is today. Julio is a man of middle age, has thre wives and two children, and probably holds is leadership by being the strongest and ablest man in the band. Exrept for one of Julio's wives and her daughter who are Elótasu, the members of the band are Wakítisu and
[595 related to one another. Julio took the Elótasu
583] woman from the Elótasu band by killing her husbani. He claims he did this because the Elótasu chief stole one of his wives some years ago. He claims he is going to steal another wife, for every *cief* is supposed to have four. Only three other men, Martin, Marciano, and Joaquin, are marrie, each having one wife. The remaining four ar either widowers or as yet unmarried.

164 Of a the Indians which I have visited in Mato Grosso the members of this band of Nambicuara were th most miserable. Of the eight men, one had syphilis, another had some kind of infection in his side, another had an injured foot, another was covred with some kind of scaly skin disease from head to foot, and another was deaf and dumb. The women and children, however, appeared to be
515 healthy. Owing to the fact that they use no
[513] hammocks but sleep on the ground, they are alwayscovered with dirt. On cold nights they remove the fires and sleep in the warm ashes.
[291] The Wakítisu wear clothes only when they are given by the missionaries, who ask that they be worn. Their distaste for bathing permits not only a covering of dust and ashes to accumulate on their skin and hair but also particles of decayed meat and fish, which, combined with stale sweat, makes proximity to them rather distasteful. They
[164] also appear to be heavily infected with internal parasite, for their stomaches are distended and they re continually passing wind. On several occasions when a number of them had crowded into he small room we used for working we had to cease work in order to air the room.

● 181 In their manners the Nambicuara also contrast
171 sharply with the other tribes I visited. The

4: Oberg E-5 (1949)1953
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

181 Caduveo, perhaps remindful of their slave-owning
171 past, are proud, conceited, and boastful. The Arawak-speaking Terena and Paresi, like the Arawak-speaking Waurá, are quiet, unassuming, friendly, and ready to help yet take no liberties. The Umotina speak only when spoken to and appear to wish to be by themselves. They provide information if they think the gifts are sufficient and to their taste; otherwise, they saunter off and are never available when required. An Umotina does just what he wishes to do and hates any kind of dictation. The Bacairí and Camayurá are intimately friendly, talkative, and ingratiating, expect gifts and bestow gifts in return, volunteer information, are full of humor and curiosity, and are clean and polite.

181 The Nambicuara, on the other hand, are surly,
576 and impolite even to rudeness. On many occa-
609 sions when I went to visit Julio at his camp he was lying down near a fire and as he saw me approach he turned his back to me saying that he did not wish to talk. The missionaries informed me that a Nambicuara will ask for some object several times and if it is not given to him he will try to take it. In order to keep the Indians out they would sometimes close the screen door, but if a Nambicuara really wanted to enter he would tear a hole in the screen and walk in. The Nambicuara have two well-recognized ways of showing disgust or disdain. One day I stopped a woman carrying a burden basket to take her photograph. She evidently did not like being stopped, for as she passed me a moment later she turned her back to me and passed wind. This the missionaries claimed is a very common custom of the Nambicuara. The men have an even stronger way of showing disbelief and disgust. After listening to something with which he does not agree a Nambicuara will get up, grasp his penis, and slap it sharply against his groin and walk off with a "that for you" look. One might call it a Nambicuara "raspberry." Although some of these personality
181 traits are old and culturally defined, there appears
648 to be little doubt that the Nambicuara have a deep hatred of the white man. They realize that the white men are rich compared with themselves and that contact with the whites has brought diseases which are killing them off rapidly. They realize, too, that both the whites and the Paresi consider them in the lowest category of human beings.

[p.650]

4: Oberg E-5 (1949)1953
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

[101]
[18]
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The Parecí call the Nambicuara "those who sleep on the ground" and ridicule them in other ways. One does not have to remain long among the Nambicuara in order to feel this underlying hatred, mistrust, and despair, which create in the observer a feeling of depression not unmixed with sympathy.

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The Nambicuara is the only tribe I have met who speak pidgin Portuguese, which without some training is almost unintelligible. For instance, "bastante" becomes *marunde*, "pequeno" becomes *shibi*, "grande" becomes *papai*, and "criança" becomes *pinto*. If they wish to compare two things to bring out a likeness they say this thing is the brother of something else.

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Compared with their neighbors, the Parecí and Iranxe, the Nambicuara are taller, darker, and longer-headed. It is very easy, for instance, even at a distance, to distinguish Nambicuara children from Parecí children when they are bathing in the river. In contrast to the light brown of the Parecí skin the Nambicuara skin appears to have an element of black that gives it a dark-gray undertone. Many individuals have a certain amount of wave in their hair, although the waviness may be accentuated by the unkempt matted condition of the hair. Detailed measurements and indexes are given in Appendix 3.[1] The eyes of the Nambicuara are very dark brown, almost black in some individuals, and have a brightness which contrasts sharply with the rather dull eye of the Parecí. The only other Indians that I have met with this brightness of the eye are the Caduveo. This brilliance of the eyes does not appear to be correlated with health, for even the sick have it among both peoples.

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The Nambicuara, as a whole, occupy a territory bounded on the east by the Papagaio River and on the west by the headwaters of the Rio Roosevelt and the Pimenta Bueno River. To the south they extend as far as the headwaters of the Rio Juruena and the Rio Kabishí. To the north they are bounded by a line running roughly from latitude 12°20′ on the Papagaio River to latitude 11° on the Rio Roosevelt. Formerly, it is believed, they extended farther northward. The telegraph line runs through Nambicuara territory beginning at Utiarity and ending at Barão de Melgaço to the west. The territory to the south and east of the Nambicuara is occupied by the remnants of the Parecí. To the north of the Nambicuara

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[1] [See cat. #6, pp. 128-135.-A.]

[p. 85(a)]